

Wisconsin's Early Childhood Advisory Council

Operating Principles

ECAC Website: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ecac/>
Revised for 2014 Implementation

Executive Order and Background:

The Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) was established by Executive Order in November 2008 under the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, which required a State Council to be created that would build upon the existing statewide early childhood programs and services. The [Executive Order](#) was renewed by Governor Scott Walker in 2011. The ECAC builds upon the work of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners, the Children's Trust Fund Board, Partners for Wisconsin Economic Success, Wisconsin State Birth to 3 Interagency Coordinating Council, and other organizations interested in early childhood education and care.

Defined Responsibilities of the ECAC:

- Conducting a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs;
- Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally- and state-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services;
- Developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing federal, state, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to under-represented and special populations; and
- Developing recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood providers.

ECAC Approved Foundations

- **Vision:** Every child will be healthy, nurtured, safe, and successful.
- **Mission:** The mission of the ECAC is to help ensure that all children and families in Wisconsin have access to high quality early childhood programs and services.
- **Priorities:** Priorities of the ECAC are that children are safe and healthy; their families are stable, nurturing, and economically secure; and families have access to quality early learning.
- **System components:** The ECAC is dedicated to creating a unified system including early care and education, safe and healthy children, mental health and socio-emotional well being, parenting education, and family support.
- **Guiding principles:**
 - **CHILDREN:** Our primary focus is on the best interests of Wisconsin's *children*, whose early years are crucial to their success.
 - **PARENTS:** *Parents* are the primary decision-makers, teachers, and advocates for their children.
 - **COMMUNITIES:** *Communities* must provide integrated quality services to ensure children's education, physical and mental health, and family support.

- **SYSTEMS:** Public, private, and government entities share the responsibility for implementing comprehensive *systems*.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Quality *professional development* opportunities support a skilled and stable workforce.
- **FINANCING:** Adequate and equitable *financing*, derived from multiple funding sources, supports comprehensive and continuous early childhood services.
- **PUBLIC POLICY:** Wisconsin *public policy* should support blended funding streams to create comprehensive systems.

Membership:

- Members of the ECAC are appointed by the Governor as per federal requirements and the Executive Order. The Head Start Act of 2007 specifies organizations that should be represented.
- The Governor's appointed Co-Chairs are the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families and the State Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction.

Meetings:

- The ECAC will meet as often as necessary but, not less than four (4) times per calendar year.
- Minutes will be kept of all ECAC meetings and will be approved by the ECAC at a subsequent ECAC meeting. The minutes will be posted online at the ECAC website for viewing by the public and members.

Substitutions:

When ECAC members are not available to attend a particular meeting:

- The member may send a representative to enable the constituency to have representation at the meetings. Substitutes for ECAC members shall not have voting privileges.
- Members who delegate a substitute should send notification to the ECAC staff indicating who the representative will be.
- When a member is absent or elects to send a substitute, it will be counted as an absence on the part of the member. Reoccurring absences may result in a withdrawal of appointment.

Voting:

- Each ECAC member is entitled to one (1) vote on each matter submitted to a vote.
- A vote of the majority present at any meeting is necessary to approve an action taken by the ECAC.
- In the event of a tie vote, the ECAC Co-Chairs will cast a single deciding vote.
- No member of the ECAC will cast a vote on any matter which would provide direct financial benefit to that member or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- In instances where an ECAC member is employed by an organization which is a recipient of financial support from the State of Wisconsin or any affiliates, that member must disclose such potential conflict of interest.

Accountability:

The ECAC annually reports to the Governor on its progress, achievements, and future opportunities.

Public Meetings:

The ECAC and Steering Committee meetings are open to the public.

- An opportunity for public comment will be held during each ECAC meeting. Prior to the beginning of the ECAC meeting, non-ECAC members may sign-up to address the ECAC. Non-ECAC members will be given up to five (5) minutes to speak, with the actual time limit depending on the number of speakers registered.
- Non-ECAC members are welcome to attend ECAC meetings. Visitors shall not occupy seats at the ECAC table, but are invited to join staff in designated seating areas.
- During ECAC small group discussions, visitors may be asked to participate in groups with ECAC members or as separate input groups.

Relationship with Other Initiatives:

The ECAC will work with other early childhood initiatives to avoid duplication of efforts. The ECAC may draw from these initiatives' work to inform their deliberations prior to making recommendations.

Rules of Order:

Formal action of the ECAC will be conducted by *Robert's Rules of Order* (most recent edition). Additionally, the ECAC will comply with the following rules:

- The ECAC will limit discussion to items on the proposed agenda. Additional agenda items may be submitted to the ECAC staff at least one (1) month in advance of the next scheduled meeting. The Steering Committee will recommend and the ECAC Co-Chairs will determine and approve the final ECAC meeting agenda.
- Persons or organizations wishing to address the ECAC will be considered for inclusion on the agenda by making a request to the ECAC staff at least one (1) month before the next scheduled meeting.

Structure*Steering Committee:*

In 2011, the ECAC combined three original committees into one (1) Steering Committee composed of the prior co-chairs for each committee. From these members, the ECAC Co-Chairs then appointed two (2) Steering Committee Co-Chairs, both ECAC members. Other members include at least one (1) senior manager from each of the three key state agencies – the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Public Instruction, and the Department of Health Services – who serve as staff to the ECAC and the Steering Committee. The ECAC Co-Chairs may review and make changes to the membership and responsibilities of the Steering Committee based on the priorities of the ECAC.

The Steering Committee is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Providing ongoing input to current and future funding opportunities.

- Coordinating and advancing the work of the ECAC.
- Guiding and coordinating the work of ECAC project teams to ensure systemic approaches to ECAC priorities.
- Reviewing, assessing, and advising the ECAC Co-Chairs on all recommendations for consideration by the ECAC.
- Making recommendations to the ECAC Co-Chairs on ECAC meeting agendas.
- Drafting the annual report to the Governor, including recommendations for ECAC approval.
- Coordinating meetings with project team chairs to ensure needed collaboration and consistency across various domains.

The Steering Committee works closely with the assigned staff and project teams to accomplish ECAC goals and objectives. In addition, the Steering Committee attempts to connect other early childhood stakeholders with the appropriate Project Teams to ensure a comprehensive, quality system of early care and education for Wisconsin's youngest citizens.

Project Teams:

The ECAC shall designate Project Teams as needed to serve functions specified by the ECAC. Such Project Teams shall exist for periods of time deemed necessary by the charge to the Project Team by the ECAC. A list of the current Project Teams will be maintained on the official ECAC website.

The Steering Committee will help create the Project Teams' overall purpose statements and offer suggestions for membership. Project Teams will serve to inform and make recommendations to the ECAC.

- A member of the Steering Committee/Staff Team will be assigned to be a liaison between the Steering Committee and the Project Team.
- The Steering Committee and Project Team Co-chairs will meet quarterly to assure coordination and collaboration among efforts and support the flow of information.

Each Project Team will have at least two (2) co-chairs representing the public and private sectors. These co-chairs will finalize membership, define key considerations, define reporting processes, and set timelines.

- Project Teams will utilize the reporting template to provide reports on their progress at the quarterly meetings with the ECAC Steering Committee.
- Project Team progress and updates are described in the annual report.
- Project Teams may have additional reports and/or recommendations that are submitted to the ECAC Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes recommendations to the ECAC Co-Chairs with regard to which reports and recommendations should be submitted to the ECAC. If reports are submitted, the ECAC will decide whether to approve the Project Teams recommendation and/or adopt the recommendation as that of the ECAC.

Project Team membership should be designed to create a balance of ECAC members/designees and non-members serving on Project Teams. Each Project Team will consist of membership from:

- ECAC members/designees;
- related program areas within state departments;
- relevant agencies and associations;
- established input groups; and
- other stakeholders.

Cross-Department Staff Resources:

The ECAC Co-Chairs will each designate lead department staff to serve as resources to support the work of the ECAC, Steering Committee, as well as to the related Project Teams. Other state department member agencies may also designate lead staff to the Steering Committee and staff related to Project Teams. Each department will designate staff to Project Teams in relationship to the team charge and the agencies' related role. Staff is not eligible to vote on any matters of official ECAC business.

These Cross Department Staff Resources will:

- Reduce fragmented activities and promote interagency coordination and collaboration.
- Support the ECAC Steering Committee and various committees.
- Align work of ECAC and departments.
- Maximize state resources, reduce duplication, and identify gaps.

Co-Chairing Departments Lead Staff Role:

Expectations for staff include the following:

- Attend all ECAC meetings.
- Ensure that minutes are taken and distributed.
- Make necessary meeting arrangements.
- Support the Steering Committee and Project Teams and other duties as needed by the ECAC.
- Support and assist the Steering Committee, including communication between the committee, state agencies, and ECAC Co-Chairs.

Member Departments Lead Staff Role:

Expectations for staff include the following:

- Attend all ECAC meetings.
- Support and assist the Steering Committee, including communication between the committee and state agencies.

Project Team Staff Role

- Attend assigned Project Team meeting, acting as a liaison between the department and the Project Team (as further described in the Project Team section).

Amendments:

These Operating Principles may be amended when necessary by two-thirds majority of the ECAC membership. Proposed amendments must be submitted for review by the full ECAC at least one (1) month prior to the meeting where a vote will take place.